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AUTHOR Kipp, Michael F.
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ABSTRACT

The interloan activities of public library systems and selected academic libraries were monitored during March and April of 1969. The objectives of this study were: (1) learn what kinds of materials are unavailable or in limited supply in area research libraries, (2) provide data for recommendations for strengthening research collections, and (3) develop a regional interlibrary loan code. The implications of this study are: (1) many requests are sent outside the region which could be satisfied within it, (2) the low elapsed time for successful transactions is not representative of the total time a user must wait for materials, (3) insufficient use is made of available routing alternatives, (4) systematic use is not made of the relative success of past requests, (5) independent routing appears to out-perform New York State Interlibrary Loan (NYSILL) both in time and positive responses, (6) Council resources in the humanities are insufficient to support demands, (7) photocopy charges from independent sources are sometimes disproportionately high, and (8) certain factors seem to mitigate against the exhaustive use of regional resources before a request is sent outside. Areas in need of further study are listed. (The final report of the July 1968 study on interlibrary loan activity is available as LI 001 599. (NH)

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Interloan Activity in Central New York:

ANALYSIS OF A SAMPLE

by

Michael F. Kipp
Staff Assistant

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THE CENTRAL NEW YORK REFERENCE & RESOURCES COUNCIL

102 WEST CENTER STREET, CANASTOTA, NEW YORK 13032

Introduction

In July of 1968, the Information Services Laboratory of Syracuse University Research Corporation released the final report of a study conducted on interlibrary loan activity for the Central New York Reference and Research Resources Council.[1] That study, commissioned by the Council's trustees, sought to determine the extent to which regional resources were being employed to satisfy requests which could not be filled at their point of origin. The survey included all categories of libraries and was sufficiently broad-based to advance three general findings concerning interloan traffic in the area:

1. That interloan activity was heavy enough to warrant the establishment of a more-or-less formal communications network among libraries;

2. That 76% of academic and 20% of public library requests were being sent outside the region and;

3. That more of these extra-regional requests were being sent to independent sources rather than through the NYSILL system.

Based on these findings, the report recommended:

1. That the Council give serious consideration to the establishment of a regional clearinghouse or bibliographic center and;

2. That a follow-on study be conducted to characterize the volume of requests being sent outside the region.

Within fiscal constraints, action has been taken on the first of these recommendations in a variety of forms. A reference group has been created to exchange information on strengths within particular holdings and to foster better (or initial) interpersonal relations among operating staffs.

Work has begun on facilitating communication through subsidy to telephone and teletype service. Moreover, plans for an updated Directory of Central New York Library Resources include a closer description of collections and any peculiarities of interloan procedure which might expedite or enhance the use of area facilities.

The second of these recommendations, vitally important to the stated objectives of the Council, came at a time when the shortage of funds precluded the hiring of an outside study team such as the Syracuse University Research Corporation. Rather than abandon the idea altogether, the Executive Director and the Committee on Interlibrary Loan drafted a proposal for a study of limited scope to be conducted "in-house", so to speak. The body of this report chronicles events pursuant to that proposal, presents an analysis of the data collected and makes specific recommendations based on this analysis and the conduct of the study.

1. Syracuse University Research Corporation. Interlibrary Loan Evaluation and Study of the Central New York 3 R's Region. Syracuse: SURC, 1968.

Interlibrary Loan Study Proposal

The Interlibrary Loan Committee of the Central New York Reference and Resources Council has recommended that the Council conduct a study of interloan activities at the research level in the Council area. This level is defined as material which will meet the needs of the serious researcher, the advanced student, or the worker in one of the recognized professions. It does not include routine public library interlibrary loan materials. The Interlibrary Loan Evaluation and Study of the Central New York 3 R's Region, carried on by the Syracuse University Research Corporation in 1968, demonstrated that the public library systems in the Council area are doing an excellent job of providing such materials. Approximately 80% of such requests are filled locally from their own resources. On the other hand, the academic libraries are able to fill only 24% of their requests within the region. If we can obtain a clearer idea of the nature of the 76% of requests which must be filled from outside of the area, the Council will be in a better position to recommend suitable patterns of cooperative acquisitions and services in our research libraries.

Scope

The study will monitor interloan activities during the months of March and April of 1969 in the public library systems and the following academic libraries: Colgate University, the

Upstate Medical Center, Hamilton College, selected departmental libraries at Syracuse University, Utica College, LeMoyne College, Mohawk Valley Community College, Herkimer County Community College, SUNY College at Morrisville, Cazenovia College, and Onondaga Community College.

The participating libraries will be asked to keep a copy of all interlibrary loan forms used during this period. (The public library systems do not use the standard A. L. A. form, since it is unsuitable for many of their requests.)

We propose to examine each request for the following information:

1. To whom the request was referred.
2. The kind of material requested; monograph or journal article.
3. Whether the request was filled with original material or photocopy.
4. The status of the requestor; undergraduate, graduate student, faculty, outside researcher.
5. Time taken to fill the request. (This is defined as arrival of the material in the borrowing library, not pickup of the material by the patron.)
6. The classification number of the material borrowed.
7. In the case of academic libraries, the method of sending the material from one library to another; mail, United Parcel, other delivery service.

In addition, we would like to know of any library to library movement of materials which takes place outside of regular channels. We would like estimates of the extent of such borrowing and the subject of the materials borrowed in this way.

Objectives

1. To discover what kinds of materials are presently unavailable or in limited supply in area research libraries.

2. To provide data for the use of our Academic Library Collections Committee, who will prepare recommendations for strengthening our research collections.

3. The revision of the A. L. A. Model Regional Code is scheduled to appear momentarily. We will examine this Code to see if it meets the needs of research libraries in Central New York. If it does not, the Council will try to develop a regional interlibrary loan code.

Initial Difficulties

Although response to the proposal was uniformly cooperative it was not uniformly informative. This must be attributed to the absence of a technical plan for analysis which would have specified the data elements to be examined and suggested guidelines for their collection and recording. These variations, though not fatal to the study, necessitated certain assumptions and re-contacts which will be described in the next section. Significant variations are discussed below:

* Most members of the test group submitted transaction slips only for those requests sent outside the region. This made it impossible to ascertain what percentage of total traffic this represented until total figures for the period could be gathered.

* Only 70% of the total transactions were dated for both departure and return. Though the figure is high enough for generalization about total activity it does not apply for every institution. Notes to the tables indicate where the number of dated slips was insufficient to compute average response time.

* Patron status was indicated on only 18% of the data; therefore, item #4 of the proposal could not be accomplished.

* Classification numbers were used infrequently if at all. Most agencies within the test group assign no classification number to serials, which constitute almost half of the loans

examined. The difficulty of correlating Dewey with LC numbers need only be mentioned. This meant that a method of subject analysis which did not rely on class numbers had to be devised.

* Method of transport was so sparsely identified as to preclude any findings concerning delivery alternatives.

Further operating difficulties which delayed the appearance of the report until the present were the sheer demands against time imposed upon a staff consisting only of the Executive Director and his secretarial support. Given the necessity of pursuing other on-going activity, work on the actual analysis of data could not begin until October when the trustees were able to appropriate funds to hire the author as an assistant to the Director. In that end-of-year totals had to be gathered in order to determine the validity of the March-April sample size, this delay did not materially affect the findings.

Assumptions and Conventions

The original test group consisted of the following institutions:

1. Cazenovia College, Cazenovia, New York
2. Colgate University, Hamilton, New York
3. Hamilton College, Clinton, New York
4. Herkimer County Community College, Ilion, New York
5. LeMoyne College, Syracuse, New York

6. Mid-York Library System, Utica, New York
7. Mohawk Valley Community College, Utica, New York
8. Morrisville Agricultural and Technical College, Morrisville, New York
9. Onondaga County Community College, Syracuse, New York
10. Onondaga Library System, Syracuse, New York
11. Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York
12. Syracuse University Research Corporation, Syracuse, New York
13. Upstate Medical Center, Syracuse, New York
14. Utica College, Utica, New York

A preliminary analysis revealed that the subject distribution was heavily weighted in favor of medical sciences and technology due to the inclusion of Syracuse University Research Corporation and the Upstate Medical Center. Since these represent only two of the more than forty special libraries in the Council's area while the coverage of academic and public libraries is exhaustive it was decided to omit them from the final analysis.

Cazenovia College received only seven interloan items for the period, none of which came from outside the region. The report therefore shows no table for their activity, although conclusions are assumed to be generalizable for all academic and public libraries within the region.

The Onondaga and Mid-York systems represent more than fifty public libraries whose interloan requests are channeled through system headquarters. With this in mind, they have

been considered as separate libraries, their elapsed time being based on the dates a request was sent from and received at its respective headquarters. In that they also serve as officially designated request transmission sites for NYSILL, those transactions handled for other members of the test group have been disregarded so as to avoid double counting.

The question of a device for subject analysis was resolved by relying on the Nelson subject classification used in that Corporation's 1968 study of state-wide interlibrary loan.[2] Many existing schemes could have been employed; this one was chosen to maintain consistency with a study already completed for the Division of Library Development, and because its categories have been used by the State Library to describe areas of strength within NYSILL. It is hoped that this choice will facilitate later comparison.

Under the assumption that the two most important questions which can be asked about interlibrary loan are "can we get the book" and "how long will it take", matrices were designed to answer these questions by subject, including cancellations. These tables indicate the volume of activity within each subject and provide a basis for comparing the performance of NYSILL with that of independent routing patterns.

2. Nelson Associates Inc. Interlibrary Loan in New York State New York: Nelson, 1969.

Portrait of the Sample

A total body of 645 extra-regional requests was examined, representing approximately 68% of all requests from academic and public libraries for the period. 77% of these were completed; the balance, for various reasons, were cancelled. While 56% of the total body was sent through the NYSILL system, NYSILL accounted for 84% of all cancellations. Of those transactions satisfied, 70% were inclusively dated: 54% of those passed through the State network and 90% of those routed independently. This information is represented on table #1.

Inclusive dating made it possible to compute the average response time for each method, shown on table #2, as well as display in a comparative manner the relative speed with which a response was achieved in each subject area. The reader is referred to tables 3 and 4 for this display. Interpretation of this data must take cognizance of the fact that a request does not always receive a conclusive response from the first source; it may undergo a second or third-plus referral. In the case of NYSILL, such referral occurrs automatically from the State Library to a subject and/or area resource center. Requests routed independently must await a negative response before they are retransmitted to another institution. The comparative occurrance of these referrals is reflected in table #5.

Reasons for the 23% of requests subject to cancellation are given in table #6. Though their number was insufficient for extensive analysis it is important to recognize their significance in terms of lost time. Since nearly all were inclusively dated it was possible to determine that concellations accounted for an average of 17 lost days each - a full four or more days longer than the average time required to complete a request.

In a general sense, the subject distribution of extra-regional requests, shown on table 6, indicates that traffic was heaviest in the area of the humanities. More particularly, the subjects of greatest intensity were philosophy, fine arts and non-American history. Other areas of near-comparable strength were sociology and engineering. Activity in all subjects is shown on table #8.

On the whole, response in a form other than original or photocopy was so rare as to be negligible. Indeed, three specific requests for microfilm of fine arts materials were cancelled for reasons of non-circulation. Response in photocopy is reflected in table #9.

Requests for non-book materials were equally rare. Two were recorded for spoken word phone-discs in English literature and were entered as monographs. Films, tapes and other non-book sources were not sought.

At least two institutions, one public and one academic, appear to use inter-library loan as a selection tool - in some instances after the loan and in others, cancelling the request to execute an order.

TABLE #1

NUMBER OF TRANSACTIONS BY INSTITUTION

	TOTALS	NYSILL	CANCELLATIONS	INDEPENDENT	CANCELLATIONS
COLGATE	23	22	1	1	
HAMILTON	115	39	5	76	13
HERKIMER	12	3		9	
LE MOYNE	14	11	6	3	1
MID-YORK	216	215	120	1	
MOHAWK VALLEY	6			6	
MORRISVILLE	25	13	4	12	1
ONONDAGA COLLEGE	7			7	
ONONDAGA SYSTEM	28	28			
SYRACUSE UNIV.	187	22		165	
UTICA COLLEGE	12	6		6	
GRAND TOTALS	645	359	136	286	15
NUMBER DATED	449	191	132	258	11

TABLE #2

AVERAGE RESPONSE TIME

NYSILL	13.4 Days	based on 53% of completed transactions
INDEPENDENT	12.6 Days	based on 90% of completed transactions

Note: These are calendar rather than working days.

TABLE #3

NYSILL RESPONSE-TIME DISTRIBUTION

	1-15 Days	16-30 Days	31-45 Days	46-60 Days	Cancel.
TOTALS	129	51	11		136
NATURAL SCIENCES:					
Physical Sciences and Mathematics	13	3			4
Biological Sciences (including Anthropology)	10	2			6
SOCIAL SCIENCES:					
Economics	5	5			5
Geography	1				
Political Science	4	4	1		6
Sociology, Social Welfare	6	2	3		10
Psychology	2				3
HUMANITIES:					
Classics, plus English Language and Literature	13	6	1		8
Foreign Languages and Literatures	2	1			8
Philosophy and Religion	11	7	1		20
Fine Arts	3	3			6
American History	4	1	1		6
Other History	7	3	2		5
PROFESSIONAL SUBJECTS:					
Business, Public Administration	10	2			5
Engineering, Technology	7	2			12
Education	8	3	1		3
Medicine	3				2
Law	3	2			2
OTHERS:					
Fiction	2				1
Biography	1	1			4
Popular Nonfiction	9	4	1		16
Miscellaneous; Generalities	4				2
Subject Unknown	1				3

TABLE #4

INDEPENDENT RESPONSE-TIME DISTRIBUTION

	1-15 Days	16-30 Days	31-45 Days	46-60 Days	Cancel.
TOTALS	133	91	28	6	15
NATURAL SCIENCES:					
Physical Sciences and Mathematics	6	1	1		
Biological Sciences (including Anthropology)	8	2			2
SOCIAL SCIENCES:					
Economics	10	3			1
Geography	3	1	2	2	
Political Science	5	1	2		4
Sociology, Social Welfare	13	2	4		
Psychology					
HUMANITIES:					
Classics, plus English Language and Literature	12	4	3		
Foreign Languages and Literatures	8	2	3		
Philosophy and Religion	6	3	1	1	
Fine Arts	16	17	2	1	2
American History	12	10	2		
Other History	12	17	3	1	
PROFESSIONAL SUBJECTS:					
Business, Public Administration	3	5	2		2
Engineering, Technology	10	7			1
Education	5	10	1		
Medicine	1	4			
Law					
OTHERS:					
Fiction					
Biography		2			
Popular Nonfiction					
Miscellaneous; Generalities	1		2		2
Subject Unknown	2				

TABLE #5

DISTRIBUTION OF CONCLUSIVE RESPONSES BY REFERRAL LEVEL
(INCLUDING CANCELLATIONS)

	1st Referral	2nd Referral	3rd Referral	Total
NYSILL	126	147	86	359
INDEPENDENT	243	40	11	286

TABLE #6

REASONS FOR CANCELLATIONS

Converted To Order	2%
Not In Library	74%
Does Not Circulate	13%
Improper Citation	7%
Time	4%
Total	100% = 151 Cancellations

TABLE #7

GENERAL SUBJECT DISTRIBUTION

	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Natural Sciences	92	13%
Social Sciences	117	17%
Humanities	278	42%
Professional Subjects	128	19%
Others	63	9%

TABLE #8

SUBJECT DISTRIBUTION OF REGIONAL REQUESTS
(INCLUDING CANCELLATIONS)

	SERIALS	MONOGRAPHS	TOTALS
TOTALS	186	459	645
NATURAL SCIENCES:			(59)
Physical Sciences and Mathematics	14	15	29
Biological Sciences (including Anthropology)	16	14	30
SOCIAL SCIENCES:			(117)
Economics	10	19	29
Geography	3	6	9
Political Science	7	23	30
Sociology, Social Welfare	16	25	41
Psychology	1	7	8
HUMANITIES:			(278)
Classics, plus English Language and Literature	13	35	48
Foreign Languages and Literatures	19	1 19	38
Philosophy and Religion	5	47	52
Fine Arts	20	31	51
American History	5	33	38
Other History	6	45	51
PROFESSIONAL SUBJECTS:			(128)
Business, Public Administration	9	20	29
Engineering, Technology	17	24	41
Education	12	26	38
Medicine	1	11	12
Law		8	8
OTHERS:			(63)
Fiction		5	5
Biography		8	8
Popular Nonfiction	3	29	32
Miscellaneous; Generalities	8	4	12
Subject Unknown	1	5	6

TABLE #9

RESPONSE IN PHOTOCOPY

	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
NYSILL	42	12%
INDEPENDENT	93	33%

Implications

For Regional Operations:

1. Many requests are being sent outside the region which could be satisfied within.

Though no systematic attention was given to this matter, a number of requests were noted for titles available at Syracuse University or the Syracuse Public Library. Full knowledge of the extent of their availability could be acquired through distributing a sample of titles to all members of the test group. Even without conducting such an effort, however, one can assume that local institutions are incurring additional expense and requiring patrons to wait longer for satisfaction from loans completed outside the region. Council delivery service reduces both these factors and its cost is an inverse function of the extent to which it is used.

2. The relatively low elapsed time for successful transactions should not be viewed as representative of the total time a user must wait for materials.

Though some requests are transmitted the day they are received, most require several days of pre-processing time in which clerical work, verification and routing decisions must be accomplished. This delay is a strong argument for a referral center which would streamline these processes, thus expediting interloan service while providing relief to institutional staff.

3. Insufficient use is being made of available routing alternatives.

Some institutions are relying exclusively on NYSILL or a given independent source for materials in specific subject areas. Such reliance produces results inferior to those of agencies which alter their sources by the subject and nature of the material. Though there is insufficient information to suggest an optimum routing for each subject, the probability of success through NYSILL appears to be weakest in the Humanities and strongest in professional subjects.

4. Systematic use does not seem to be made of the relative success of past requests.

The results of this study might be disseminated to inter-library loan personnel with an eye to encouraging such use, either through employment of the present methodology or the creation of a system better suited to local needs.

5. Independent routing appears to be out - performing NYSILL, both in terms of time and positive response.

The average response time for the former is particularly noteworthy when it is recalled that requests are not automatically referred but must be returned to the point of origin and retransmitted.

6. Council resources in the humanities seem to be insufficient to support the demands of even the strongest regional institutions.

Paradoxically, area humanities collections are no doubt

among the most exhaustive. This indicates a heavy research interest in these subjects and suggests, say, philosophy and fine arts, for example, as topics where cooperative acquisitions of seldom-used resources should be considered. This matter lends itself to deliberation by a regional resources committee.

7. Photocopy charges from independent sources are in some instances disproportionately high.

Utica College, for instance, incurred a charge of $1.50 for two pages of copy from the University of Illinois. This is a further argument both for staying within the region whenever possible and for agreeing on a policy of costing photocopy services among member institutions.

8. One may only speculate about the factors which mitigate against the exhaustive use of regional resources before sending a request outside.

Inter-personal relations across institutional boundaries may be enhanced by agressive efforts to acquaint operating staffs with one another. Familiarity with regional holdings, short of a union catalog, may be gained by such devices as the rotation of reference librarians from agency to agency for a limited period each month. Above all, council publications such as the Directory, the Union List of Serials, and Refermation should begin to reflect holdings strengths in a more particular sense. As has been previously implied, work along these lines has already begun in committee.

For Further Study

1. Any study undertaken by or for the Council will require a more thorough going statement of objectives, technical plan for analysis and concept of the use to which the results are to be put.

Under the heading of "consider the feasibility of...", the Council will no doubt study many things. It might be worthwhile to draft guidelines for study and survey activity. In this connection, the Council might solicit the help of the Library School at Syracuse University.

2. The Council might consider the use of the present methodology to monitor interloan traffic in the future.

3. A committee of the Council might convene to establish uniform recording procedures for <u>all</u> inter-institutional activity. Together with their rationale, the setting of these procedures would greatly encourage acceptance and facilitate any future region-wide survey.